SUBSTITUTED SPECIFICATION

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The present invention relates in general to the field of automated business processes that match buyers with sellers of goods or services while also targeting marketing to such buyers. More specifically, the present invention relates to an automated process that receives specifications of physical, functional, temporal, financial [[and/or]] and geographical parameters, and specifications of physical, functional, temporal, financial or geographical parameters from buyers, and matches the buyers with sellers of such goods [[and/or]] and services, and goods or services that satisfy the parameters and specifications. The present invention also provides targeted marketing capabilities to such buyers based upon Profile Links to sellers provided via a network. The invention further provides for advanced proposal comparisons, and proposal, purchase order, invoice, and payment reconciliation goods and services rendered, and integration of such reconciliation of actual costs and technical specifications with accounting and back office payments systems.

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In today's fast paced economy, many projects exist that require various goods [[and/or]] and services, and goods or services to be provided by numerous organizations (hereafter, "sellers") while also requiring relationships for providing and monitoring such [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services to be quickly and efficiently established. Examples of such projects include drilling for oil, commercial [[and/or]] and residential, and commercial or residential construction, manufacturing complex objects (for example, aircraft and special use objects), and providing specialized services (for example, brokering excess power and bandwidth, and developing unique software products). When planning such project(s), the

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persons responsible for the project (hereafter, "buyer") is often faced with the daunting tasks of:

(1) determining which [[goods/services]] good and services, and goods or services are needed;

(2) determining who provides such [[goods/services]] good and services, and goods or services

(i.e., who are the "sellers"); (3) establishing a dialogue with such sellers; (4) selecting at least one

seller; (5) facilitating post-completion tasks (for example, paying sellers and other back-end

processing); and (6) attempting to identify areas of improvement of future projects.

For example, when constructing a building, a general contractor must decide which seller

will provide excavation services, what type of materials to use, when the materials will be used,

who will supply the materials, who will use the materials (i.e., who will actually construct the

building) and other various factors. Currently, when constructing a building, the builder will

often use a Rolodex® to determine which preferred sellers provide the desired [[goods/services]]

goods and services, and goods or services. Upon identifying the sellers, the buyer may then

engage in some dialogue with the seller about the project parameters, and may solicit proposals.

Since each seller may identify a unique manner for accomplishing the specified task, the buyer

is often left with trying to determine which seller is providing the best value, the best approach,

the best timeliness, etc. Since such determinations can be quite time consuming, buyers generally

do not have time to stop for other than a limited number of sellers for any given project. As such,

new sellers on the market, [[and/or]] and new techniques, and new sellers on the market or new

technologies may often be overlooked.

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Further compounding the problems faced by buyers in identifying and coordinating

[[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services from sellers is the fact that sellers

often dictate which of the numerous currently available processes for processing

[[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services to use (e.g., auction, fixed price and

quantity systems, and other systems well known in the art). For some of these processes, most

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of the essential terms of the agreement are dictated or controlled by the seller, with the buyer having little input over price, delivery terms, location, quantity, etc. (examples of such seller driven processes include retail, mail order, telephone, and some on-line sales systems). For example, a builder desiring to procure nails might be required by a retail sales process or an on-line sales process to purchase nails only in bundles of 200, for a set price. Since the buyer cannot modify the [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services or terms or conditions of the procurement process, the buyer's needs are often inadequately, untimely, and inefficiently fulfilled.

Additionally, recent automation of the aforementioned seller driven processes (for example, via the Internet) has not adequately addressed this problem. While the new automated processes generally enable a buyer to shop for goods [[and/or]] and services, and goods or services without having to travel to the seller's location or obtain a catalog, such processes are commonly characterized by sellers offering items of commerce under seller specified terms and conditions. Such processes do not allow a buyer to identify a project in terms of its specifications, and have the specifications translated into requests for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services that are then fulfilled in a timely and efficient manner by a seller providing the requested for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services or suitable alternatives. Additionally, such processes often do not identify sellers of specialty [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services and, therefore, are often inadequate for the provisioning of goods [[and/or]] and services, and goods or services that are not commonly mass marketed. In short, a more efficient process of matching buyers and sellers is needed.

Similarly, currently available buyer driven processes also do not facilitate the efficient matching of buyers and sellers. Examples of commonly available buyer driven processes include bidding processes and auctions. Regardless of the process (whether bid based or auction based),

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a buyer is generally first required to identify specific [[goods/services]] <u>goods and services, and</u> <u>goods or services</u> that are needed to complete a project. None of the processes allow a buyer to specify a project in terms of project details that are then automatically converted into requests for proposals, requests for specific goods, or other such proposals. Neither do any of the processes provide ready access to information to help a buyer, or seller, determine the appropriate details necessary to adequately specify a project or respond to such a request. As is appreciated by those skilled in the art, converting specifications for complex projects into specific requests for [[goods/services]] <u>goods and services, and goods or services</u> is extremely time consuming, is often incomplete, and is extremely inefficient because the buyers often can not precisely identify and/or specify those [[goods/services]] <u>goods and services, and goods or services</u> available and needed to fulfill a project. As such, today's buyer driven processes do not provide the degree of flexibility, specificity, and efficiency necessary for many buyers of [[goods/services]] <u>goods and services, and goods or services</u>. Therefore, a process is needed that enables a buyer to procure those [[goods/services]] <u>goods and services, and goods or services</u> necessary to undertake and complete a project by providing a project's specifications to an automated process that facilitates the conversion of such specifications into requests for [[goods/services]] <u>goods and services, and goods or services</u> and matches the buyer with sellers of such [[goods/services]] <u>goods and services, and goods or services</u>.

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Additionally, once an agreement has been entered into to provide [[goods/services]] <u>goods and services, and goods or services</u> needed to fulfill a project, systems are not available to enable both buyers and sellers to monitor the progress of the project, efficiently implement design changes, provide billing and other back-office functions, and determine areas for improvement by utilizing knowledge based systems. Thus, a process is needed that enables [[buyers/sellers]] <u>buyers and sellers, and buyers or sellers</u> to enter into agreements for projects

and monitor such projects for initialization through [[post-completion/termination]] post-completion or termination, and post-completion and termination.

Further, with the advent of the Internet as another medium for the marketing of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services, sellers have sought efficient and useful mechanisms for marketing their [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services to buyers via web pages. In order to encourage buyers to visit the seller's web pages, at which their [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services are often offered for sale or identified, sellers utilize various marketing mechanisms including: static marketing (where an advertisement is displayed as a static graphic or textual description on a portion of a buyers computer screen); flash marketing (when an advertisement is flashed on the buyer's screen for a brief time period); banner marketing (wherein a "billboard" providing a hyper-link to the seller's web page is provided on a portion of a web page the buyer is currently viewing); and various other marketing mechanisms. In spite of these various and numerous methods of marketing via the Internet and other networks, such methods have been shown to be very inefficient in promoting [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services because such methods do not generally provide targeted marketing to buyers when they are most likely to consider acquiring a sellers [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services, for example when they are undertaking a project in which the sellers's [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services may be utilized.

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Therefore, a new method for providing marketing to buyers is needed. More specifically, a system and process is needed that combines the efficiencies and unique capabilities of the present invention, as explained further herein, to match buyers with sellers of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services.

The present invention is directed to a process and system that matches buyers and sellers

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of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services based upon specifications provided by a buyer for a project. Additionally, the present invention provides a forum for the negotiation and resulting agreements to provide [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services needed for a project, while also allowing buyers and sellers to monitor the status of the project [[and/or]] and the provisioning of the agreed upon [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services. The invention provides buyers and sellers with access to industry specific information to assist them in determining and providing the necessary goods and services. The invention also provides buyers with tools to compare different proposals in detail and to manipulate the parameters of those proposals to ascertain different results based upon potential project outcomes. Further, the invention facilitates the completion of post task accomplishment activities such as back-end accounting and billing operations, reconciliations of proposed costs with actual costs, invoices, and purchase orders, resource management, and knowledge management. Lastly, the present invention provides a process and system for providing targeted marketing by sellers to buyers during all phases of a project including project initialization, monitoring, and post-completion phases.

More specifically, the present invention provides a system and process that, upon identification of specifications for a project by a buyer, generates a request for goods [[and/or]] and services, and goods or services needed to fulfill the project and provides the request to those sellers designated by the buyer [[and/or]] and those sellers that can provide the requested [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services. In response to such requests, the sellers may submit proposals, request additional information, recommend changes to project parameters [[and/or]] and the [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services requested, and perform various other activities. The present invention enables sellers to directly communicate with the buyer, including providing documents and other information that are readily accessible by the buyer, the sellers, and others (engineers, other project members, etc.)

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from anywhere, at any time, via a suitable communications link. In this manner, the process facilitates the matching of buyers with sellers of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services based upon project parameters, and not necessarily upon the specific identification of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services by a buyer. Additionally, it is to be appreciated that a "project", as used in this specification, includes activities involving single steps (for example, procuring casing for a well) as well as activities involving numerous steps (for example, building a house), and is not to be construed as being limited to any specific classes of goods, services, activities, or projects.

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More specifically, when utilizing the systems [[and/or]] and processes, and systems or processes of the present invention, a buyer specifies parameters that describe a project. Examples of such parameters include the following: physical parameters (e.g., size, weight, height); functional parameters (e.g., able to accelerate from 0 to 60 m.p.h in less than 6.0 seconds); temporal parameters (e.g., to be delivered by Tuesday); financial parameters (e.g., to cost less than $10.00); transactional parameters (e.g., to be paid by check or money order); [[and/or]] and geographical parameters (e.g., located in Colorado). The physical, functional, temporal, financial, [[and/or]] and geographical parameters, or any other parameters that may be appropriate for completion of the project, are hereafter collectively referred to as "Parameters."

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Additionally, it is to be appreciated that the present invention may be accomplished using any system, automation, [[and/or]] and "Turing machine" ,and any system, automation, or Turing machine. An "automation" is herein described as a mechanism that is relatively self-operating and designed to follow a predetermined sequence of operations or respond to encoded instructions. A "Turing machine" is herein described as an abstract expression of a computing device that may be realized or implemented on an infinite number of different physical

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computing devices. Examples of systems, automations [[and/or]] and Turing machines, and systems, automations, or Turing machines that may be utilized in performing the process of the present invention include, but are not limited to: electrical computers (for example, an IBM personal computer); neuro-computers (for example, one similar to the "General Purpose Neural Computer" described in United States Patent No. 5,155,802, issued to Paul H. Mueller, on October 13, 1992); molecular computers (for example, one similar to the Molecular Automata Utilizing Single or Double-Strand Oligonucleotides" described in United States Patent No. 5,804,373, issued to Allan Lee Schweiter et al., on September 8, 1998); biological computers (for example, one similar to the biological computer presented by Ehud Shapiro, of the Computer Science and Applied Mathematics Department at the Weizman Institute of Science (Rehovot, Israel), at the Fifth International Meeting on DNA-based Computers); and optical computers. For purposes of simplicity, such devices hereinafter are referred to as "computers", as is commonly understood in the art. But, the invention is not limited to such devices and may be accomplished upon any system or collection of systems capable of providing the features and functions identified herein. Additionally, when providing the before mentioned marketing capabilities, the present invention preferably associates buyer profile information with identifications of seller provided [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services to target the marketing to the buyer. The profile information may be based upon any act, information, or event supplied or accomplished by the buyer including, for example, an on-line application or Internet site currently being visited by the buyer, answers to a questionnaire, and other information. More specifically, the present invention preferably accesses databases that maintain profiles of buyers. Such profiles may include factors such as the location of the buyer, various Parameters, buyer characteristics, web site access history, and preferred seller lists. Throughout this specification, the profile information is preferably accessed by a "Profile Link"- which is herein defined to include a process or system for providing profile information for a

seller or a buyer to another buyer or seller. Additionally, in the preferred embodiment, a Profile Link is a hyper-link to an associated web-page. However, those skilled in the art appreciate that process or system for providing profile information may be utilized by [[and/or]] and in conjunction with the present invention.

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Figure 1 provides an overview of a preferred embodiment of the process of the present invention. As shown, the process of the present invention generally provides the functions of allowing a buyer to identify a project in terms of project Parameters (Block 102). These Parameters are then utilized, by a system implementing the process, to generate requests for the provision of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services needed to accomplish the project and match buyers with sellers of such [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services (Block 104). Preferably the requests are received by at least one seller who then provides a response specifying the terms and conditions under which the seller is willing to provide the requested [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services or alternatives thereto. Depending upon the amount of variation between the request and proposal, and other factors, the process preferably continues with negotiations occurring between the buyer and at least one seller until the necessary terms are agreed upon and a matching of a buyer with a seller is accomplished.

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Upon matching such buyers and sellers, the process provides the capacity of entering into contracts between the buyers and sellers for the provisioning of the needed [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services. Additionally, the process provides for continued monitoring of the progress of the project by utilizing work orders (Block 106). The work orders preferably provide an electronic task sheet that is utilized by sellers to identify [[tasks/goods]] tasks and goods, and tasks or goods to be provided and the status of such [[tasks/goods]] tasks

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and goods, and tasks or goods. Automated monitoring capabilities for the work orders are also provided (Block 108). Such monitoring features enable the process and users of the process to stay abreast of developments and the status of a project.

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Once the project Parameters have been identified, they are preferably entered into a system implementing the present invention (Block 204). The system then preferably determines whether the project meets the appropriate building codes, quality control standards, business rules, and any other requirements [[and/or]] and specifications required by law, code, regulations, standards, preferred methods, etc. Such laws, codes, regulations, standards, and preferred methods, for example, are well known in the art, and are not discussed nor identified herein.

When a project clears the aforementioned checks, the process preferably converts the Parameters into requests for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services (Block 206). When converting the Parameters into requests, the process utilizes expert systems, including artificial intelligence modules, rule based processes, matching processes, classification processes, and various other processes or combinations of processes, as necessary to generate requests for the provision of specific [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services. The systems and processes necessary to convert Parameters defining a project into at least one request may vary significantly based upon the project, the Parameters, [[and/or]] and the [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services needed. The present invention accommodates such variations by providing a process that may utilize other processes, as necessary, to perform such conversions. Additionally, it is to be appreciated that a project may generate hundreds of requests for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services. All such requests are preferably generated and supported by a system implementing the present invention. However, the process may also utilize Parameters provided by external systems (for

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example, via a network connection, floppy disk, CD, or similar device).

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Additionally, each request preferably includes those terms and conditions commonly associated with a particular project or type of project. Such terms and conditions may be provided, for example, on templates, data entry charts, and other devices used to generate requests for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services. Buyer requests, for example, may be requests for proposals, [[requests for proposals,]] requests for estimates, requests for feedback, or requests for current contract pricing. However, the process may also suitably accommodate various other types of requests, as desired.

Upon generating a request for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services, the request is transmitted to the sellers (Block 208). The process then continues with a dialogue between the buyer and seller. In order to facilitate the dialogue and reach a common understanding on the scope and terms of the request, when necessary, the process allows both the buyer and the seller to access documents provided via a centralized location [[and/or]] and over a network connection. Such documents may include the project Parameters, suggestions from sellers about how to accomplish a given task, proposals on [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services, and similar information. By utilizing appropriate security systems, the process enables real-time interactive dialogues to occur between a buyer and a seller via any system, format, or protocol that facilitates the communications of such requests to sellers and responses to buyers.

Additionally, the process provides for notifying sellers that a request is available by utilizing any available forms of communication including, but not limited to, e-mail, postings on Internet sites, telephone messages, pager messages, facsimile, and mail. Additionally, the process enables the buyer to determine to whom and when requests are communicated. For

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example, a request may be designated for communication to specific sellers identified on the buyer's preferred seller listing. Similarly, the requests may be communicated to any seller providing the requested [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services. Such sellers may be identified in centralized data records, via searches of the Internet, or in other databases. In short, the present invention accommodates the communication of requests [[and/or]] and responses to as few or as many sellers, buyers, or others, as desired, by the originator of the communication.

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Upon receiving requests, sellers may respond in a variety of ways (Step 210). Responses by sellers may include, for example, offers to provide the requested [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services, offers to provide substitute [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services, and proposals of alternative solutions. In short, any type of response by sellers may be accommodated by the present invention. As noted above, sellers can be aided in formulating their responses by the information links provided by the knowledge management component of the system. As is further understood by those skilled in the art, responses by sellers may be processed by any system including Internet based systems, telephone message systems, and e-mail systems. In the preferred embodiment, as mentioned previously, responses by sellers are provided real-time to buyers by utilizing a system that permits both buyers and sellers to access a database containing the project Parameters, requests and seller responses. Therefore, any manner of communicating a response by a seller to a buyer is considered to be within the scope of the present invention.

Once a response is received from a seller, the process preferably provides the response to the buyer in real-time (Step 212). As in the case of communicating requests to sellers, the process may utilize any manner of communicating responses from sellers to buyers [[and/or]] and notifying buyers and sellers that requests, responses, updates, or another other communications

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are available for their review. Additionally, as desired, the process may manipulate such responses such that they are in a form specified by a buyer, a seller, [[and/or]] and a system implementing the process, and a buyer, a seller or a system implementing the process. Thus, the process may convert a response into a legally binding offer, into an engineering specification, or any other format specified by the buyer or seller. The process may also be configured to display side-by-side a buyer's requests with at least one seller's response and preferably with multiple sellers' responses. In this manner, the buyer may review and compare responses simultaneously without having to access numerous databases [[and/or]] and files, and numerous databases or files.

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Upon communicating the response to the buyer, the process preferably continues to facilitate negotiations between the buyer and at least one seller, when desired. When the buyer and seller have agreed upon the terms provided in a response or a counter-response (i.e., a rebuttal provided by the buyer to the seller), the process preferably establishes a contract between the buyer and seller for the provision of the bargained for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services. It is to be appreciated that the original request and the seller's response may undergo numerous iterations and modifications before a final agreement between the parties is reached. The present invention suitably accommodates such iterative processes by providing the necessary data archiving and storage functions.

Since delays, rescheduling, and substitutions of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services often occur when undertaking a complex project (for example, drilling an oil well), the process also provides for the adaptation of contractual terms, as necessary, by allowing both parties (the buyer and seller) to monitor the progress of the project at any time via a common database. These project monitoring features enable buyers and sellers to more precisely determine when specific [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services

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will actually be needed without having to engage in repeated attempts to contact each other via telephone, fax, e-mail, or other mediums. As is appreciated in the art, for some projects, establishing lines of communications between numerous parties is often impossible, impractical, and financially prohibitive.

For example, when drilling for oil in Greenland it is often very difficult to establish reliable and continuous communication links withe the rest of the world. Instead of being required to contact numerous sellers about construction delays or accelerations, the process of the present invention enables a buyer or a buyer's team member (for example, a rig foreman) to simply access a database containing the project's Parameters and provide an updated status to all interested parties (preferably via a network linked to the database). Such interested parties may include the seller providing the pumping rig, the accountants with the oil company, the drilling engineer monitoring the progress of the well from Texas, and others. Thus, the present invention facilitates continued project monitoring after a contract has been formed between a buyer and a seller for the provision of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services. Additionally, by maintaining databases, the process facilitates the archiving of projects, requests, proposals, and other information. The archived information may then be utilized to further process by which project Parameters are converted into requests and buyers and sellers are matched.

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Figures 3A-C illustrate another embodiment of the process by which the present invention facilitates the generation of requests and responses, and the formation of contracts for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services between a buyer and at least one seller. As shown for this embodiment, the process begins when a user logs onto a system implementing the process (Block 302). Upon logging on, verification is made that the user is a project owner (i.e., a buyer), a member of a buyer's team, a seller, or a member of a seller's team

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by requesting an appropriate user identifier (Step 304). The process allows a buyer to designate members of a team working on the specific project while also allowing sellers to designate members of a team working on the specific project while also allowing sellers to designate their team members. Further, a buyer may limit access to information associated with a project to specific buyer's team members and sellers. Additionally, the buyer may deny certain buyer's team members permission to submit requests, reply to responses, or to perform various other tasks. Similarly, a seller may limit the authority, access, and capabilities of seller's team members. Team members may also be, for example, joint interest partners in a project, as is common in the oil and gas industry. Such partners may be granted as much or as little access to the project information as any other team member. In this manner, the process allows buyers and sellers to set the desired levels of security required to access specific features and information provided by the process.

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When a new user desires to become an authorized user, the process continues with obtaining information form the user (Block 310). The information obtained may include, for example, a user profile that includes a name, address, phone numbers, bank accounts, billing information, and other information necessary to engage in electronic commerce. The information obtained also includes an identification of whether the user is to be a buyer, a buyer's team member, a seller, or a seller's team member. When the user desires to be a buyer or a seller, the process preferably includes a verification of the user's credentials. The verification step may be accomplished automatically (for example, by searching a directory of supplies in a particular industry sector), or manually (for example, by having a customer support specialist verify via phone, fax, writing, or other sources a user's identity). In this manner, the process limits misrepresentations of buyers [[and/or]] and sellers, and buyers or sellers.

Similarly, when the user desires to become an authorized buyer's team member (for

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example, a drilling engineer assigned to a buyer's team), or a seller's team member, appropriate

verifications are made with database files established by the buyer or seller, as appropriate, for

identifying team members. Additionally, the process also may issue telephone, fax, e-mail, or

direct data inquiries to a buyer or seller seeking authorization to add the new user to their

respective teams. Similarly, when a buyer or seller establishes a team, preferably the buyer or

seller specifies the level and type of access each team member is to have. For example, a

geologist on a buyer's team may have access to templates providing geological information, but

is not allowed access to processes that submit requests, accept proposals, or other functions. In

this manner, the present invention provides a system and process that enable a [[buyer/seller]]

buyer or seller, and buyer and seller to limit and provide access to a centralized project database

for any team member, regardless of location, while also preventing access to the information and

features of the process by an unauthorized user.

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Upon completing a transfer of a file into a format compatible with the process, or when

a file transfer is not desired, the process preferably continues with the buyer or buyer's team

member inputting [[and/or]] and editing, and inputting or editing Parameters that describe the

project (Block 334). Depending upon the complexity of the project, numerous Parameters may

be needed to describe a project or, for example, in the case of a simple product purchase, only

a few Parameters may be needed. The process preferably provides templates and other data entry

fields (which may be selected, for example, via pull-down menus) to assist the buyer or buyer's

team member in entering [[and/or]] and specifying, and entering or specifying the appropriate

Parameters. The templates preferably request a buyer to provide those terms and conditions (i.e.,

The Parameters) necessary to describe the project, while not requiring the buyer to actually

specify a specific quantity or a need for a particular good or service. As such, the templates may

assist a buyer in completely defining a project by providing data fields requesting specific

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information essential to defining the project. For example, an oil-drilling project may include a template that provides data fields for entering a well hole depth, a location, and a date. The remainder of the terms (for example, the fact that a particular drilling rig may be needed because of the desired well depth or location) is preferably determined automatically by the process based upon the buyer's inputs. These templates may be automatically populated by importing data from applications used or files created on the buyer's system. The buyer can additionally supplement the data in the templates with attachments providing additional information from other sources.

Similarly, the process also allows a buyer to specify commodities (i.e., specific [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services) without identifying a complete project or project specifications. For example, a drilling engineer may need only 10,000 feet of well casing. Instead of specifying a project and well for such casing, the system allows the engineer to request the specific [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services) needed, where they are to be delivered, and when they are needed. The remaining Parameters needed for such a project (for, example, arranging transportation for the casing to the well) are preferably determined by the process (either automatically or in conjunction with a buyer's inputs). In short, the process allows a buyer to define a project in general terms, with additional specifications provided either automatically or upon prompting on detain sheets and templates generated by the process. Those skilled in the art appreciate the fact that the level of detail often is inversely proportional to the level of expert [[and/or]] and rule based, and expert or rule based processing available to convert the Parameters into specific requests for [[goods/services]] goods or services, and goods or services. As such, the present invention may be tailored to any desired level of expertise (for example, a master, apprentice, or novice level). Additionally, the process may be configured to recognize that a specific buyer may need additional prompts or assistance, as demonstrated by a buyer experience rating. Additionally, the process may be configured to

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recognize that a specific buyer may need additional prompts or assistance, as demonstrated by a buyer experience rating. Additionally, to facilitate the generation of requests, the process preferably gears each detail sheet to the needs of the buyers in light of the available technology. In this manner, the process enables buyers to enter as little detail as possible, if so desired, while the system "fills-in-the-blanks" and provides the remaining details necessary to prepare a request by accessing the appropriate program modules, expert systems, and other rule based processes. The process is also, preferably, routinely updated to take into consideration new products, techniques, and methods for accomplishing a given task. Such updates may be automatically generated by the present invention or suitably accessed from other systems via a network, such as the Internet, or other communications systems.

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Once the Parameters for the project have been provided, the process preferably continues with verifying that the Parameters comply with the appropriate design rules (Block 336). The design rules are preferably provided as elements of a process provided for an industry specific application. For example, design rules specific to the construction industry may specify conditions such as the type of reinforcement utilized in a foundation supporting a given story building, or the grade of wiring needed to provide a dryer circuit. Additionally, generalized design rules, which are applicable to a wide variety of industries [[and/or]] and projects, and industries or projects, may also be utilized by the process. Such generalized design rules may include, for example, ensuring compliance with environmental rules and regulations, OSHA rules and regulations, and other information applicable to a project.

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When the Parameters do not comply with the various design rules, the process suggests changes to the Parameters (Block 338). The changes suggested vary depending upon various factors including the project at issue, the Parameters already entered, and the design rules. The

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process provides the design change recommendations to the buyer, which the buyer may add, delete [[and/or]] and modify, and add, delete, or modify. The process preferably records the recommendations, additions, modifications, and deletions of each Parameter for subsequent use by knowledge systems when attempting to streamline the matching process.

After the buyer has provided a set of Parameters (which preferably have been verified by the system) the process continues with either saving the Parameters for future use or categorizing the Parameters into at least one request for a good or service (Block 340). As may be appreciated, for complex projects, such as drilling an oil well, the Parameters may be reviewed and modified by numerous geologists, engineers, rig operators, and others prior to the generation of actual requests for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services (Block 342). Additionally, a buyer may desire to develop the Parameters for a project and save such Parameters for future use after regulatory or other approvals have been acquired. As such, the process preferably provides a mechanism by which the user may save project Parameters without having to produce requests for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services. At this stage, the process preferably ends or is temporarily delayed until new Parameters are provided or a request is generated based upon the Parameters (Block 344).

When the buyer desires to have the Parameters converted into requests for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services, the process preferably continues with examining each Parameter (as provided in a template or data entry field) and identifying different classifications of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services needed to satisfy each Parameter (Block 346). The process preferably makes such identification by utilizing pre-defined classifications of goods (for example, casing, wiring, and lumber) and services (for example, cementing, framing, and plumbing). When Parameters exist for which a classification does not exist, the process preferably generates unique classifications reflective thereof. These unique classifications are preferably selected by the buyer for transmission to

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select sellers providing similar [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services, but may also be provided to any seller, as desired by the buyer.

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Additionally, in an alternative embodiment, the process may also include searches of other projects for the buyer in order to determine whether economies of scale may be obtained by combining requests from numerous projects into one request (Block 348). For example, the purchase of 2 x 4 boards may be less expensive by the truckload than by the half truckload and by combining two housing project requests into one request, a truckload of lumber may be requested and savings realized. Similarly, a user may also authorize the process to combine requests based upon geographic or other considerations. Thus, the process may be configured to obtain any desired economies of scale in the procurement of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services by associating Parameters with classifications of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services.

After identifying classifications of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services and grouping such [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services together, the process preferably determines whether a first grouping depends upon a second grouping for information (Block 350). For example, the system might determine that a drill bit grouping depends upon casing information in order to know which type [[and/or]] and diameter of drill bit to request. The process also examines whether descriptions of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services exist for the grouping identified. For example, a drilling engineer might request specialized equipment for which [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services classifications do not exist. In such instances, the process preferably creates an error report that may be utilized to identify new groupings and sellers of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services fulfilling each such grouping. Additionally, the process preferably converts groupings of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services

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into specific [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services descriptions that correlate to [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services descriptions being offered by a seller in a geographic area. In this manner, both the buyer and seller are in concurrence as to which [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services are fulfilled by specific descriptions.

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In addition to converting Parameters into requests, the process may also be configured to attach conditions, terms, documentation, and other information into identifications of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services (Block 352). These conditions may include, for example, warranty provisions, payment terms, and delivery terms. Documentation may include additional information about the project to supplement the Parameters given. For example, a geophysical survey may be attached to a proposal request for a particular well drilling project. Such attachments, for example in a preferred Internet embodiment, may take the form of hypertext URL or other file transfer links to information located on the buyer's system.

At this point, the process preferably searches at least one database containing a listing of sellers providing the [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services identified in the groupings (Block 354). Such databases and files may include preferred seller lists, non-approved seller lists, and other information necessary for determining to which sellers a request for the identified [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services should be made. Further, the process may also be configured such that buyers search only for pre-approved sellers of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services. In some industries, for example oil and gas, buyers often desire to enter into agreements only with proven sellers. Similarly, some sellers may desire not to be identified as providing [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services to some buyers (for example, due to a past history of poor payment). The process also interrogates any additional databases and files, as necessary, to determine whether

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specific sellers should receive a request from a specific buyer.

In order to accomplish the searches for sellers, preferably each seller has pre-registered with a system implementing the process. When registering, each seller suitably identifies the classifications of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services they provide and any specific terms or conditions for such [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services (for example, delivery and payment options). Sellers may adjust the [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services they provide, or are designated as providing, at any time. Additionally, the process may search databases (for example, the yellow pages), the Internet, and other resources, as desired, even if the seller is not registered with a system implementing the process.

Upon identifying those sellers that provide the needed [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services, the process preferably continues with the buyer designating sellers to whom the requests are to be transmitted (Block 356). While the process preferably transmits requests only to the selected sellers, it is to be understood that buyers may select as many sellers as desired to receive requests (even sellers that do not provide the requested [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services). The process also allows buyers to utilize a preferred sellers list (or similar pre-identification of those sellers with whom the buyer desires to conduct business). When a preferred sellers list exists, the process preferably limits communication of such requests to only the preferred sellers. The process also facilitates the anonymous requesting of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services by masking a buyer's identity or using other confidentiality and security features such as secure socket layers, encryption schemes, and dedicated networks.

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Additionally, the process preferably verifies whether the response complies with the design rules established for a given task (Block 364). For example, a response changing a

particular gauge of wiring selected for a given task might be upgraded to a lower gauge or downgraded to higher gauge by a seller. If the changed gauge provides the necessary load carrying capacity for the given circuit, as in the case of a lower gauge, then the process preferably accepts the design change. However, if the changed gauge does not provide the necessary load carrying capacity, then the process preferably notifies the seller of the deficiency and allows the seller to change the response or to not change the response, while highlighting the discrepancies to the buyer (Block 366). Preferably, the process verifies the seller's response when it is submitted. However, the process may be configured to verify a seller's response at any time, for example, during the formulation of the response, or at a later time (for example, when a new regulation comes into effect that may impact the response). Therefore, the process preferably applies the same business rules and design verifications to each seller's response as it applies to each buyer's request. In this manner, both sellers and buyers are measured to a given level of certainty that a request, and response is acceptable and in compliance with the appropriate business and other rules. However, the process may also be configured, as desired, such that the design rules and other preferred verifications of a seller's response are not conducted [[and/or]] or provided.

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Further, when a seller's response does contain terms or Parameters that have been identified by the process as not being in compliance with a given rule, the process preferably utilizes expert and knowledge based systems to suggest changes to the seller's response (Block 368). For example, an expert based system for electrical projects may recommend that a lower gauge of wiring or a modified circuit design is needed in order for the response to comply with a given set of electrical codes, for example, a set of codes accessible via a network connection such as the Internet. The seller may then accept the recommended changes, provide other changes, or deny all changes and submit the response (Block 370). At this point, the process

again verifies whether the response complies with the design rules (Block 364) and the process continues with verifications [[and/or]] and design changes, and verifications or design changes until either the response complies, or the seller indicates that the response will not include any more changes that it is to be presented to the buyer as specified. At this point, the response is available for the buyer to review and a notification that the response is available is preferably sent to the buyer (Block 372).

As is to be appreciated by those skilled in the art, the process of verifying a response and multiple revisions to a response may be accomplished as many times as is necessary and desirable. For highly complex operations, such as building an airplane, in which numerous variables, factors, and design rules may come into play, the [[request/response]] request or response, and request and response review process may be quite extensive. The present invention preferably accelerates such design review processes. For example, changing a seat configuration on an airplane may impact systems such as electrical, environmental, weight distributions, and numerous others. As such, the process preferably automates as many design rules as possible, thereby simplifying the conversion of design Parameters into requests for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services and the verification of responses thereto.

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Preferably, the buyer and at least one seller eventually agree upon a response that fulfills the buyer's needs. When this occurs, the buyer and seller preferably elect to enter into an agreement, utilizing the terms supplied in the final negotiated response. The process facilitates those actions (commonly known in the art) necessary to enter into an agreement and provides the ancillary documentation, verifications, and other components needed in an agreement (Block 374). Additionally, for the preferred embodiment, the agreement is entered into electronically without the exchange of any paper based documentation or agreements between the buyer and

seller. As such, the process preferably covers all aspects of designing a project, determining [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services necessary to complete the project, and the entrance into at least one contract providing for such goods and services.

As is appreciated by those skilled in the art, the process described above may be implemented on any system, network architecture, configuration, device, machine, or apparatus, and is not to be construed as being limited to any specific configuration, network, or systems. The process may be suitable implemented on conventional computing devices, for example, computer workstations, on Internet based applications, on optical computing devices, neural computers, biological computers, molecular computing devices, and other devices. As may be appreciated by those skilled in the art, the present invention, in short, may be implemented on any system, automation, [[and/or]] or Turing machine, and any system, automation, and Turing machine. Similarly and more specifically, the Parameters specified by a buyer in a request (or a seller in a response) may include any Parameters necessary to adequately describe a buyer's needs [[and/or]] or the [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services that a seller can provide in response to such needs.

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Also, the present invention is not limited to matching specific types of buyers with specific types of sellers. Any buyers may utilize the present invention, as desired to acquire [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services from any seller. For example, drilling engineers may utilize the process to obtain casing used in a well from both steel pipe and concrete pipe sellers. Similarly, a financier of an oil-drilling project may acquire investors for the oil-drilling project by providing project specifications to potential investors (sellers) who then offer to provide financial resources (services) to complete the project. As such, the present invention may be modified, as necessary, to match buyers and sellers for any [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services regardless of industry, complexity, local, or any other

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consideration.

The present invention also provides a process that allows sellers to pre-identify themselves as providers of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services based upon categories [[and/or]] or classifications of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services instead of identifying themselves based upon specific [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services. Such identifications may include, for example, industry product codes. Similarly, the present invention may also be configured to facilitate the automated matching of buyers and sellers by searching the Internet and similar networks for sellers of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services when a general request is submitted by a buyer. Such features suitably expand the universe of potential sellers for a given request beyond those sellers pre-identified to the process - a feature that may be extremely valuable when rare [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services are needed.

As shown in Figure 4, the process of the present invention may be implemented by a system 400 for matching buyers 402 and sellers 404 of goods [[and/or]] and services, and goods or services via a network 401. The network 401 may be any means of communicating a buyer's needs for goods [[and/or]] and services, and goods or services (as reflected by Parameters associated with such [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services) to sellers. The network 401 similarly facilitates the needs of sellers 404 to provide [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services to buyers 402. A processing system 406 controls the interchange of information between buyers 402 and sellers 404 through the network 400, thereby ensuring an organized and controlled market is established and maintained for both buyers and sellers. The processing system 406 also preferably converts a buyer's needs into requests provided to sellers and facilitates all of the interactions between the buyers and sellers, and other processes identified herein. However, those skilled in the art appreciate that the features and functions of the buyer's system, the seller's system, and the processing system may be suitable combined or

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separated into any number of components and systems, as desired, without departing from the scope of the present invention. For example, the features and functions of the processing system, in an alternative embodiment, may be provided in part by the buyer's system while the remainder of the functions and features are provided by the seller's system. The present invention is not limited to any specific configuration, system, networks, or devices.

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Additionally, the process of the present invention accommodates any type of network, system, method, or means of converting and communicating a buyer's needs for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services to at least one seller. The process of the present invention may be accomplished by any system that allows a buyer to specify Parameters that are then converted into requests for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services and communicated to sellers of such [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services. Examples of such systems include, but are not limited to, telephony-based networks (wherein Parameters are specified using telecommunications devices connected to the processing system 406), computer based networks (such as the Internet), optical networks, neural computing networks, and biological computing networks. It is to be appreciated, by those skilled in the relevant arts, that the process of the present invention may be accomplished in a multitude of configurations, systems, architectures, networks, and devices.

In an illustrative embodiment of the present invention (described in greater detail below), the process is accomplished via an Internet based system. The Internet provides the interfaces, the communications mediums, the software, databases, and expert systems, via at least one server, which are used by a buyer to communicate Parameters for a project, convert the Parameters into requests, and communicate the requests to a seller. A seller, upon receiving notification that a request is outstanding, utilizes a compatible device (for example, via a wireless device) to review requests, recommend alternatives, and submit proposals - all via an Internet

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connection. Responses from sellers may then be verified by the Internet [[and/or]] and transmitted to the buyer. Thus, in a preferred embodiment, a computerized network facilitates a buyer's specification of a project's Parameters, converts the project Parameters into requests for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services, and presents such request(s) to sellers providing the needed [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services.

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Additionally, the present invention facilitates targeted marketing of sellers' [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services by utilizing Profile Links. As shown in Figure 5, the process by which the present invention provides the targeted marketing preferably begins when a buyer selects a template or data entry field on an system implementing the buyer and seller matching process of the present invention. However, while the Profile Links are preferably utilized in conjunction with the above described process of matching buyer and sellers, it is to be appreciated that the Profile Links may be utilized in conjunction with any system, process, or application that identifies a user based upon their current on-line activities. Additionally, for the purpose of the present discussion, the Profile Links process is preferably implemented whenever a buyer accesses a screen on an Internet or Internet emulating process (i.e., a process that enables a user to jump from one data page to another upon selecting a link thereto).

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As shown in Figure 5, when the Profile Links are provided in conjunction with the above described matching process, the Profile Link process is preferably implemented whenever a user selects a template, data entry field, or function that has an associated Profile Link (Block 502). At this point, the Profile Link process suitably determines a profile for the buyer (Block 504). In the preferred embodiment, in which an Internet based web site [[and/or]] or application is the medium by which a vendor advertises their [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or

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services to a user, the buyer profile information is obtained before the buyer accesses a page or template providing a Profile Link. Preferably, the profile information is obtained when the buyer "signs-up" for the matching process of the present invention or another system implementing the Profile Link process.

More specifically, when the buyer signs-up, the process queries the buyer about various topics and subjects. These queries may cover any topic that an operator of the process or a seller considers to be important. For example, when a general contractor signs up for the process, a query may be issued asking in which geographic areas the contractor generally constructs buildings. Based upon this information, a profile may then be established that indicates to suppliers of areas outside the buyer's general geographic area, that the buyer may not be a good target for their [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services. However, the present invention is not limited to pre-set profiles or pre-set queries for determining a profile. The buyer's profile may be established by responses to inquiries, previous entries, buying habits, Internet access habits, specific needs, or other indicators. The buyer profile may also be established by the simple fact that the buyer has assessed a specific Internet site, web page, or application. Additionally, the process may be modified, as necessary, to accommodate the various [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services, characteristics, needs, and preferences of buyers, sellers, and operators of any system implementing a Profile Link.

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Further, profiles may be created on a separate computer processor or on the buyer or seller's computer workstation. As such, the profiles may be centrally generated [[and/or]] or remotely generated, and centrally generated and remotely generated. Profiles may also be packetized and distributed across the Internet, as desired. Those skilled in the art appreciate the various methods, systems, and configurations by which profiles of users [[and/or]] or vendors, and users and vendors may be created, stored, shared, and manipulated via the Internet.

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Therefore, the present invention is not to be limited to any method or system for determining, providing, or using a profile. Any method that provides sufficient information to establish such profiles (to whatever degree of precision) may be utilized by the present invention.

Upon determining a user's profile (i.e., a buyer's profile or a seller's profile), the process preferably screens any previously entered or established profiles and determines which profiles "best fit" a buyer based upon a buyer's current activities, the Internet site selected, [[and/or]] or the application being utilized by the buyer (Block 506). The "best fit" screening process may consider factors such as geographic location, previous requests for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services, and past history with specific sellers (i.e., does the buyer have a history of using the seller's [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services). The "best fit" screening process may also consider whether the buyer has specifically identified a seller as a preferred vendor. However, the process is not limited to any specific screening tests, or conditions and may utilize any factor to identify those sellers whose [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services "best fit" a buyer's current needs.

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Figure 6 provides one embodiment of a system implementing the Profile Links feature. As shown, in this embodiment a Profile Link processor 602 is in communication with at least one database 604 and the Internet 606. The Profile Link processor 602 may comprise any processor capable of handling the profiling and data manipulation features necessary to target seller's [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services to a buyer. As such, computer workstations, mainframe computers, servers, and other networked systems may be utilized as the Profile Link processor. In the preferred embodiment, the Profile Link processor utilizes a distributed architecture, thereby allowing multiple processing systems to provide the Profile Links and various other marketing features of the present invention to a wide variety of buyers and sellers.

Similarly, a buyer's system 610 can be connected via a link 622 to the Internet 606, [[and/or]] or via a second communication link 616 to the ISP 612. As provided for the seller's system, the buyer's system 610 may be any device that provides Internet connectivity and the functions and features specified herein. Such devices include personal computers, personal computing devices, wireless telephones, interactive televisions, Internet equipped radios, pagers, personal data assistants, and other devices.

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The present invention facilitates targeted marketing based upon buyer and seller profiles, preferably obtained via an Internet or other network based system. As buyers [[and/or]] or sellers, and buyers and sellers respond to requests and responses, enter data, navigate the web, and perform other functions, the Profile Link processor compiles such information and establishes profiles based thereon. The Profile Link processor may provide numerous profiles for each buyer and seller, as desired. Thus, the present invention additionally provides a method and system for providing targeted marketing to buyers based upon profiles of buyers [[and/or]] or sellers, and buyers and sellers. While the Profile Link feature of the present invention has been depicted with reference to the process shown in Figure 5 and the embodiment shown in Figure 6, it is to be appreciated that the Profile Link feature is not limited to any hardware configuration, software applications, or processes. The Profile Link feature may be implemented on any system and may utilize any scheme, method, or system for utilizing buyer [[and/or]] or sellers, and buyers and sellers. While the Profile Link feature of the present invention has been depicted with reference to the process shown in Figure 5 and the embodiment shown in Figures 6, it is to be appreciated that the Profile Link feature is not limited to any hardware configuration, software applications or processes. The Profile Link feature may be implemented on any system and may utilize any scheme, method, or system for utilizing buyer [[and/or]] or seller, and buyer and seller profiles to target marketing to such buyers [[and/or]] or sellers, and buyers and sellers.

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As shown in Figure 8A, the IBE facilitates the entry of project specifications and buyer or seller profile information in order to match buyers with sellers of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services in the oil and gas industry. More specifically, the IBE is initially accessed by inputting the appropriate uniform resource locator on a web browser connected to the Internet. As shown, upon accessing a server hosting the IBE, a main menu page 800 is displayed. This page 800 provides access by both a buyer and a seller, via an Internet connection, to the features and functions of the present invention. However, as discussed above, it is to be appreciated that this embodiment, and various other embodiments of the present invention, may be accessible via any network and system including, but not limited to, the Internet, intranet, private network, local area networks, wide area networks, and public networks. The main menu page provides links (via tabs, buttons, and hyperlinks) to various other screens (which are provided on various web pages). Further, the IBE preferably provides the before-mentioned security and control features by utilizing a login name 802 and password 804 to control access. Additionally, various links to industry related information, and other information is provided. Such information links appear elsewhere throughout the pages and templates of the IBE to afford users the ability to consult such sources when determining the Parameters for projects.

When the Buyer selects the "unsubmitted" link 912 seen in Figure 9A, the IBE preferably displays the New Bid Request and Details Summary page 1000, as shown in Figure 10A, which contains a listing of unsubmitted requests for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services and relevant summary information. By appropriately selecting the corresponding links, the Buyer may review the status of any of these projects, the well (as listed by name), the hole section, and the requested type of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services needed. For example, by selecting the "South Pass 68" link 1002 system preferably

presents to the Buyer project details for the South Pass 68 project via the page 1004 shown in Figure 10B. As shown for this embodiment, the project details include a project name, project description, project location information, and other information relevant to an oil and gas project. Additionally, this page contains various "buttons" that allow the Buyer to "Edit/Update Project Detail" 1006, "Add Well to Project" 1008, "View Project Users" 1010, and "View Wells for Project" 1012. As stated previously, the present invention provides a Buyer with access to any information at any time desired. As represented by the previously identified buttons (1006-1012), the IBE incorporates a flexible database management system that permits access to information at various times from various web pages.

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For example, when the buyer selects the "View Project Users" button 1010, the IBE suitably displays the Project Users page 1014, which displays those Buyers on a specific buyer's team (the buyer is identified as the "owner" in the IBE) in a table 1016. Additionally, the system enables the [[buyer/owner]] buyer or owner, and buyer and owner to add or delete team members by selecting a specific person from a drop down menu 1018 and designating a role for the person via the menu 1020. The IBE allows as many team members as are desired to be added to a project by the [[buyer/owner]] buyer or owner, and buyer and owner. Additionally, the IBE preferably identifies possible team members when they enroll with the system. For example, all the Company QRS employees signed onto the IBE would be associated with a single pool of potential team members for a [[buyer/owner]] buyer or owner, and buyer and owner who also works for Company QRS, whereas Company JKL employees might not be so associated. Once the team members have been selected, the system preferably returns to the preceding page from which it progressed.

When a Detail (for example detail "17") 1028 is selected, the IBE preferably displays the

details for the request, as shown in Figure 10E on the "CH Logging..." details page 1030.

In the IBE, each detail page also includes a Profile Link 1032 that contains an identification of sellers for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services associated with a specific request (in this case CH logging). Additionally, the Profile Link 1032 enables the Buyer to select specific sellers as preferred sellers, identify a sales person or point of contact, and when available, includes a hyperlink (as underlined) to web pages providing information about a specific seller's [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services. As mentioned previously, the present invention preferably targets marketing (in this case identifying sellers of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services associated with a specific oil field task) to a buyer based upon the buyer's profile information. For example, if the Buyer had previously identified a specific vendor as a non-preferred vendor, then the Profile Link would not display such a vendor to the Buyer. Similarly, if the Buyer identified a seller as a preferred vendor, then marketing information associated with the seller may be provided via the Profile Link to the Buyer. Further, when the Buyer desires requests from any seller, marketing materials may be provided for all sellers, except preferably those previously identified by the Buyer as excluded, via the Profile Link.

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Further, each details page 1030 also includes data entry fields in which data may be entered and prompts answered (for example, a prompt 1034 whether production logging is needed). Additionally, as shown, the details page 1030 has been abbreviated from its actual length for purposes of simplifying this description. It is to be appreciated, however, that web pages of any size, length, and complexity may be utilized in conjunction with the present invention [[and/or]] or the IBE, and the present invention and the IBE. Further, the IBE allows a Buyer to save the details as a final version or a draft, delete the details page, and reset the details to propagated values [[and/or]] and baseline [[values/settings]] values or settings, and

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values and settings, when desired via buttons 1036.

Referring again to Figure 10D, the IBE generates a proposal package that identifies information about a request in addition to the specific [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services needed. Figure 10F provides an example of a portion of a package page 1040. As shown, the IBE preferably packages a request into a document (electronic) that identifies, for example, the request, the project, and the well's names or names if more than one well is included in the package. The IBE allows numerous requests [[and/or]] or details, and requests and details for specific tasks to be incorporated into a single package, when desired, thereby encouraging economies of scale and other savings. More specifically, the system allows a Buyer to obtain a proposal from a supplier for any number of jobs (for example cementing jobs) on any number of wells instead of bidding out each [[well/job]] well or job, and well and job independently. In addition to the various information entered or automatically propagated into the various data entry fields (the IBE preferably propagates information from previous data entry fields whenever possible; thereby streamlining the request process), the IBE also allows a Buyer to attach files and establish categories 1042 to which information related to a current request are attached. For example, the request for CH logging is related to casing information and tubing information. Referring again to Figure 10D, the IBE also enables a Buyer to submit an unsubmitted proposal to preferred sellers via button 1044, select sellers and then submit 1046, and close bidding 1048.

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Upon submitting a request, the IBE leaves the request pending until the Buyer closes bidding, accepts a response from a seller to the request, or the request expires (as indicated by an expiration date). Whenever any of these events occur, the request enters the closed status. Upon selecting the closed proposal requests link 916, the IBE preferably displays the Closed Bid page 1100, as shown in Figure 11. As provided before, the Closed Bid page 1100 displays a table

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listing the proposal requests by date, project name, well name, hole section name, and [[request/detail]] request or detail, and request and detail type.

Referring again to Figure 9A, when a Buyer selects the replies link 918, the IBE preferably displays the Replies to Bids Requests page 1200, as shown in Figure 12A, which identifies all the requests for which a [[reply/response]] reply or response, and reply and response by a seller has been provided. As provided before (with respect to the other proposal types), this page 1200 provides a table that lists the proposal requests by date, project name, well name, hole section name, and [[request/detail]] request or detail, and request and detail type. Additionally, page 1200 contains columns identifying the [[vendor/seller]] vendor or seller, and vendor and seller 1202 (hereafter, the vendor [[and/or]] or seller [[and/or]] or seller's team member are collectively referred to as the "Seller", i.e., the person providing a response to a proposal request), whether the Seller is interested in the request 1204 (yes or no), whether the Seller provided any feedback to the request 1206, and the response date 1208. Upon selecting a link provided in the vendor column 1202, the IBE suitably displays the Vendor Info page 1210, which obtains information on the selected Seller from a database and presents the information such that the Buyer may obtain contact information for the Seller.

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Further, upon saving the project details, the IBE redisplays the Project Details page 1400 while additionally including buttons to: Edit/Update Project Profile 1404; Add Well to Project 1406; View Project Users 1408; and View Wells for Project 1410, as shown in Figure 14B. Since in the oil and gas embodiment, a project is basically a collection of wells, the Buyer generally will want to add a well to the project. Upon selecting the corresponding button 1406, the system preferably displays the Well Definition page 1412, as shown in Figure 14C. The Well Definition page 1412, preferably contains field s in which a Buyer may enter information about a well including: well name, well description, well API number, well type, [[region/basin]]

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region or basin, and region and basin; and the location of the surface hole for the well using various measurement systems. Alternatively, instead of entering all of the information needed to define a well, the system also permits the Buyer to copy information provided for a different well into the new well definition by selecting and copying a predefined well via the well drop down menu 1413. In those situations where the Buyer desires to drill many wells using the same or similar techniques, the ability to copy well definitions can save significant time. Additionally, as before, the well information is preferably entered only once into the IBE as it is automatically and appropriately populated to future pages, as necessary.

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Upon saving the information entered on the Well Definition page 1412, the IBE suitably displays a summary of the information previously entered on the Well Definition page 1412 as a Well Summary page 1414, as shown in Figure 14D. Additionally, the system provides a drop down menu for Hole sections 1416, by which a Buyer may describe a hole section for the selected well. As shown in Figure 14E, the Hole Section Details page 1418 provides fields in which information needed to define a well may be entered and saved. As is well known in the art, the process of defining a well may involve numerous hole sections. The IBE allows a Buyer (for example, a drilling engineer) to define and save each hole section. Referring once again to Figure 14D, the IBE also allows a Buyer to view the history of a well's performance by selecting the Well Description/History button 1420, which results in displaying the Well Summary page 1422 shown in Figure 14F. The history of a well is preferably captured in the IBE when drilling engineers, rig foreman, and other members of a drilling team provide update reports. As is common in the oil and gas industry, such update reports are preferably provided daily, however, any other time interval may be utilized including, for example, real-time updates, weekly updates, monthly updates, yearly updates, and updates upon completion of a project.

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At this point, the Buyer is ready to generate requests for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services needed for the project. The IBE preferably provides a Buyer with numerous options for generating requests. Various aspects of the oil drilling industry are captured in the various request templates provided by the system including for example: CH drilling, mudding operations, casing, drilling fluids, and so forth. Upon generating a request (using templates similar to those previously discussed above), the Buyer directs the IBE to communicate the request to the designated sellers (or all sellers). At this point, the Buyer's actions needed to generate a request for [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services have been completed. The Buyer then awaits a response, if any, from a Seller.

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Figures 15A - D provides an example that has been communicated to a seller (after being notified of its existence by the IBE). As shown the Primary Cementing page 1500 provides a request for primary cementing that includes information on all aspects of the well that are relevant to a primary cementing job. Upon receiving the request, the seller is provided with the options of: indicating that they are interested in the project, via the Interested button 1502 (Figure 15D); indicating that they are not interested in the project, via the Not Interested button 1504; submitting feedback related to the project, via the feedback field 1508 and associated buttons (as seen earlier, the feedback may include requests for additional information, recommendations on alternative approaches, or any other information); and submitting a [[proposal/response]] proposal or response, and proposal and response via the Submit Bid/Proposal button 1508. The interested, not interested, and feedback options provide a reply to the buyer that may then be suitably displayed and examined (as discussed earlier).

When the Seller selects the [[bid/proposal]] bid or proposal, and bid and proposal button 1508, however, the IBE proceeds to provide the Seller with a Bid Pricing page 1510, as shown in Figures 15E and 15F (Figure 15F displaying a populated version of Figure 15E). As shown,

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the Bid Pricing Page 1510 for cementing provides fields in which a Seller specifies a currency and various proposed costs for mobilization, set-up, third party costs, services, a total cost, an expiration date for the offer, terms, and other information. Upon entering this basic information, the IBE provides the seller with the option of attaching documents 1512, [[and/or]] or viewing detailed [[bid/pricing]] bid or pricing, and bid and pricing templates 1514, as shown in the Primary Cementing - Commercial Response page 1516 shown in Figures 15G and 15H (Figure 15H being a continuation of the screen display shown in Figure 15G). Upon entering the appropriate costs into the detailed pricing page 1516, the Seller may then save the pricing and send the response to the Buyer.

Upon receiving the response and accessing it via the Request Manager page 1600, as shown in Figure 16A, the Buyer may then view the seller's [[bid/proposal]] bid or proposal, and bid and proposal as shown in Figure 16B. If the seller's response is acceptable to the Buyer, the Buyer may accept the proposal by selecting the Award button 1602. Upon selection of the Award button 1602, the IBE finalizes a contract for the agreed upon [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services between the between the buyer and seller. In addition to the summary pricing information 1604 provided, the buyer can review more detailed pricing breakdowns by selecting the detailed pricing link 1606 that will access a page with such information.

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Lastly, the IBE provides Sellers with many of the functionalities provided to Buyers. For example, Sellers have the option of designating themselves as providers of specific [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services. Additionally, Sellers can conduct searches for requests available for them to review - those requests designated by Buyers for only a list of preferred sellers are preferably not searchable by sellers not designated by the Buyer. Additionally, as Buyers change Parameters for a project, the sellers are suitably notified of such

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changes so that they may resubmit [[and/or]] or revise, and resubmit and revise proposals as necessary. Finally, as shown in Figure 18, via the Request In-Box page 1800, sellers are suitably notified by the IBE of outstanding requests, requests to which they have expressed an interest, and other information associated therewith. As such, the IBE specifically provides a fully interactive system for managing and entering into contracts for the oil and gas industry and generally provides a process and system for matching buyers and sellers for the provision of [[goods/services]] goods and services, and goods or services based upon Parameters.

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In the IBE, once a seller completes a project, step 2010 of Figure 20, a field ticket (referred to in the IBE as the eField-Ticket™) reflecting the actual work performed, goods and equipment used, and costs thereof is prepared in a specific system environment accessible over the network, step 2020. When the seller's representative confirms the entries, notification that the field ticket is ready for review is communicated to the buyer's representative, step 2030. In one preferred embodiment, the seller accesses the network and the field ticket environment of the system via a wireless network connection from the field.

In the alternative, if the project site is so remote that it is impractical or impossible to connect with the network, the invoicing environment may be provided locally on the seller's equipment and later interfaced with the system when access to a network connection is available. The buyer's representative, if present at the project site can approve of the field ticket or negotiate changes before confirming the field ticket on the system. If the buyer's representative is no longer at the project site, the buyer's field [[and/or]] or office representative, and field and office representative may access the field ticket from the network, once the field ticket is entered into the system. Just as during the procurement phase of the project, the system facilitates the interchange between buyer and seller to reconcile any variances between the field ticket, purchase order, and the actual invoice(s) submitted by respective sellers. Once a field ticket is issued and

approved, the system may pass the invoice information from the field ticket to the buyer's accounting or "back office" system for payment processing, step 2040. If the field ticket is not approved by the buyer's representative, the field ticket actuals may still be passed to the buyer's accounting system. In either case, payment processing may then include reconciliation of the field ticket with the seller's final invoice before payment is made, step 2050.

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Referring to Figure 19A, in the IBE in order to initiate the field ticket process, the seller accesses the original Bid Award page 1900 that contains the Project Level information 1902 as well as the Parameters of the specific request for which the proposal was awarded 1904. At the bottom of the Bid Award page, Figure 19B, is a link button 1906 to view the eField-Ticket™ process pages. When the seller links to the eField-Ticket™page, Figure 19C, a list of previously created field tickets 1908 for the project is presented. By selecting a field ticket item from the list, the seller can review a previously saved [[and/or]] or submitted, and saved and submitted field ticket that has been prepared for a specific request. In addition, a link button to create a new field ticket 1910 is available for selection.